NUMB. CXLIV.

The Prompter.

He carries Anger *as the Flint does* Fire,
Which, much enforc'd, ſhoots out a haſty Spark;
And, ſtrait, is cold, again.

Shakeſp. Jul. Cæſ

TUESDAY, MARCH 23. 1736.

THE Author of *The Double Deceit*, having lately been pleaſed to ſend me a Letter, in Acknowledgment and Support of the Juſtice I was willing to do him, againſt the voluntary Blindneſs of *Prejudice*; has ſince, thought fit, in a ſecond, to reſtrain me from publiſhing it; aſſigning, for *Cauſe* of ſuch Change in his Reſolution, the new *Proofs* he receives every Week, that the Gentlemen of the *Grub-ſtreet Society*, ſeem not to be *deſirous of Conviction*: delighting rather in the Exertion of their *Spleen*, than in the Exerciſe of their *Reaſon*.

HE informs me, very pleaſantly, in the Cloſe of his Letter, that as he was returning the other Day, along the Coach Road, from *Chelſea* toward *Buckingham-Houſe*, he met with a Knot of *Weſtminſter* Scholars; of whom Two had been *wreſtling*; and One gave the Other a very *fair Fall*, in the Opinion of moſt of their Companions. But, while the Conqueror was appealing to the Senſe of the Circle, His Competitor ſnatch'd up a *Squirt*, which he had wantonly brought out with him, and retreating to a *muddy Ditch*, by the Side of the Road, diſcharged Shower after Shower, at his Antagoniſt: who, recollecting that He was decently dreſs'd, and unprovided for an *adequate Return of the Torrent*, gave way, with a Smile of Diſcretion, and *took leave* of his Play-fellow; telling him, with a parting Retort of the Head, that *He was not afraid to be* WET, *but aſham'd to be* DIRTY.

" I found, continues my Correſpondent, an *In-*
" *ſtruction*, in this whimſical Hint; and applied it
" to the Conteſt between myſelf, and the *Gentle-*
" *men of Grub-ſtreet*; If theſe Climbers of *Par-*
" *naſſus*, cannot find *Limpid* Waters, wherewith
" to repleniſh their *Squirt*, It is plain They are not
" *high enough up*, to lay claim to the Uſe of the
" *Fountains*: Therefore, I ſhall leave them, un-
" diſturb'd to the Exerciſe of their Talent; and
" am reſolv'd, from this Time forward, *to renounce*
" *all further Debate*, until It ſhall pleaſe them to
" recollect themſelves, and *reaſon*, LIKE *Scholars*,
" and *Clergymen*. —— My honeſt *Friend*, too, their
" Printer, may *compoſe* the Diſturbance in his
" *Spirit*: for, That *Carnal Weapon*, wherewith he
" falſely ſuppoſes I *threaten'd* him, had no ſuch
" *miſguided* Intention. Yet, I hope, ſince He tells
" me, that *Quakers muſt not fight*, They hold it
" equally criminal any *other* Way to be *Peace-*
" *breakers*. ——— However, I believe it an *In-*
" *juſtice* to charge *him*, in any Light, with aſſent-
" ing, what his *Name* has been *naughtily* ſet to.

THUS *far my Correſpondent*; and, I confeſs, I was glad when I read this Reſolution, ſo becoming the Man of *Senſe*, and the Man of *Humanity*. —— Mr. *P*— can have no Room to *queſtion*, that the *Readers* of his Play will be Diſcerners of the manifeſt *Injuſtice* that was done it, at its laſt *Repreſentation*. And, when the peeviſh Perverſeneſs of *Conteſt* ſhall have ſubſided, and made way for the Coolneſs of Reflection and Judgment, I cannot doubt, but a Truth, ſo *obſerv'd* and *well-known*, will be acknowledg'd by his very *Oppoſers* themſelves, who are, now, ſo fond of the *contrary* Sentiment.

I believe I have made it undeniably Evident, in one or two of my Papers, that ſome of the Places injudiciouſly attack'd, in the *Double Deceit*, were *Thoſe*, remarkably fulleſt of both moral and poetical *Beauties*. But, be that as it will, I inſiſt on it, that It is both a wiſe, and a generous, Reſolution, in an Author, to put an *End* to all Controverſy concerning his Writings, when once the Diſpute becomes *invectively perſonal*. In ſuch Caſes, *Both* Sides are *Loſers*, without Either's *gaining* any the leaſt Ground, by way of Equivalent. HE, therefore, ſeems *Superior*, who firſt can conquer his *Anger*; and grow ſenſible of this uſeful Truth which we have been told by an Excellent Poet.

" *While Self-Defence each jealous* Writer *rules*,
" *Contending* Wits *become the Sport of* Fools.

I ſhall therefore, in Compliance with this generous *Deſire* of the Author of the Comedy (the Extent of whoſe *Merit*, I ſee, ſtrongly, *in* That very Deſire) forbear to add any thing to what has already been ſaid in its Defence; and leave it to the *Claim* of its due Juſtification, in the Hands of its *Readers*: where it has nothing of that *Ill Nature* to apprehend, which ſeems to have been ſo induſtriouſly promoted, at the Theatre.

I don't know how it happens, that we Writers unwarily permit ourſelves to grow *warm*, in our Reaſonings, and confound *Things* with *Perſons*. No Example ought to have Weight enough to miſlead us into ſo unfruitful a Practice: (I *except* Caſes, where *Perſonal* Qualities are the *Subject* we treat of) But, I judge with the *Partiality* Men are apt to deceive themſelves by, or the Gentlemen (whoever they are) at the Head of the *Grub-ſtreet Journal*, have been *oftneſt to blame*, in this particular Error: tho', if I conceive not a very wrong Notion of the Scheme they *might* purſue with moſt Honour, and Intereſt, It is a *Deviation*, of much worſe Effect in *Their* Caſe, than in That of the Authors of any *other* Paper, now publiſh'd among us.

WHAT

WHAT I mean, is, that, to allow the full Scope to the *Humour* of their TITLE, One would expect an *ironical Tranſverſion of Cenſure*; where (to keep up the *Reſemblance* they aſſume) as They ſhou'd never beſtow *Praiſe*, but upon the Dull, and Ridiculous, ſo they ſhould delicately, and pretendedly, level the Seemings of their *Satire*, againſt Nothing but *Wit*, and *Good Judgment*.

IN a Plan, of this Turn, Nothing *gravely* malignant cou'd have Place; and, conſequently, *Anger*, and *Invective*, muſt be excluded. SATIRE *ſmiling* her Reproof into Favour even of the *Party corrected*, the Gayety of the *Manner* wou'd ſerve, as a *Veil*, to the Malice, and afford no Motives to Reſentment.

I ſhall be better underſtood, if I borrow a Paragraph from our *Great Poet* above-mentioned, as I find it in One of his *Letters* to a Friend, among That beautiful Collection, not long ſince made publick.

" DR. *SWIFT* (ſays he) much approves what " I *propoſed*, even to the very *Title*; which I deſign " ſhall be *The Works of the Unlearned*, publiſhed " Monthly, in which, whatever Book appears, that " *deſerves Praiſe*, ſhall be *depreciated ironically*; " and, in the ſame manner that modern Critics " take, to UNDERVALUE Works of *Merit*, and to " COMMEND the *high Productions of Grub-ſtreet*.

IF *This*, as ſeems reaſonable to believe, was the *Hint*, that gave Beginning to the *Grub-ſtreet Journal*, I am ſorry, for the Town's Sake, and the Paper's, that It was not *directly purſued*: The Field it threw open was the moſt *copious*, and *fruitful*, that cou'd well have been cultivated. ——All, that Judgement, and Humour, and Satire, and Fancy, cou'd have *wiſh'd*, they might have found, in *this Scene*, with the viſible Difference and Advantage, of ſetting to *View* what was *Inſtructive*, while they *diſguiſed* what was *Bitter*: whereas, in the Model they have choſen to proceed by, the *Offenſive* lying uppermoſt, often hides the *Good Uſe*, and prevents the Effect of the *Cenſure*.

RESOLVING to *take Leave* in this Paper, of the Gentlemen who have the *Adminiſtration of Grub-ſtreet*, I was willing to offer the foregoing Thought to their Reflection, as a *Proof*, that, if I have ſometimes, appeared to be angry, I was *angry without Malice*: and can look forward on a Proſpect of their Enlarging their Plan, and their Fame, not with *Patience* alone, but with *Pleaſure*.

IN the mean time, the Publick will always be of my Correſpondent's Opinion, who thinks, It ſhou'd rather be the Buſineſs of ſuch *Pigmy* Diſſertations as Ours, to fill up our diminutive Space with what relates to our *Reader's* Inſtruction, than our own Juſtification. — The Attacks, and Defences, which ſo warmly engage us, in Support of our jarring Pretenſions, will be always a *Waſte* of our Labour. At a Coffee-houſe in the *City*, I one Day had the Mortification of ſeeing myſelf twiſted up, in Reſentment, and *applied to a Fiſhmonger's Pipe*, for having been fuller of *Fire* than of *Fancy*: — But, I had the Comfort, at the ſame Time, to obſerve the *Grub-ſtreet Journal* ſnatch'd away, from an oppoſite Table, and *carried backwards in more Haſte than uſual*, by a teſty Old *Scrivener*, who had been Snarling himſelf into the Cholic, *at the Impertinence of your Quarrelſom Writers*.

Be it known and declar'd notwithſtanding,——that nothing I have herein advanc'd, for Excluſion of *Perſonal* Cenſure, ſhall extend, or be conſtrued to extend, to *Players*, *Dancers*, *Tumblers*, *Fine-Ladies*, *Pretty-Fellows*, or, to Artiſts of any other Profeſſion, Occupation, or Manufacture, whatever, wherein Decoration, or Diſpoſition, of Perſon is the very MATTER and Thing of their Character.

To return to the Conſideration of That licentious Propenſity in Audiences to forget, at *new Plays*, the Characteriſtic *Humanity* of *Engliſhmen*, They aſſemble, with a cruelly premeditated Reſolution, *not to hear*, *nor reflect*, for *Fear*, they ſhou'd find themſelves PLEAS'D, *As* If it was to be imputed as a *Crime*, that a Gentleman is deſirous to *give Pleaſure!* Shou'd not, rather, the DISPOSITION to *write* for a *Stage*, that is ſo *loſt*, ſo *deſerted*, ſo invaded by *Monſters*, and *Mummery*, be receiv'd, as a *Merit*, that, (*alone*) might lay Claim to *Encouragement?*

THE Method, (ſays a humorous Writer) of *Judging*, now in vogue, is *hearing Sounds by other's Ears, and reliſhing Wit by other's Underſtandings*; Tho' I wou'd have the World, in general, very *diſcreet*, in the Matter of Judgment, yet I cannot approve of this ſlaviſh Compliance, that reſigns the nobleſt Faculty of the Mind, to a mean Dependance upon *whimſical Headpieces*, who may chance to be the moſt Ignorant of Men.

IF you happen to *applaud* any thing, in Contradiction to the Sentiments of ſuch Perſons, you are immediately ſtopp'd ſhort ——*How, Sir! do you conſider what you are praiſing?* Tom Driveler, *and* Tim Trifle *ſay, It is the worſt Thing that ever was writt.*——That may be, Sir;——but I judge for *myſelf*, as if *They* were not in Being: Indeed, if Any Man wou'd give me a Reaſon——*Reaſon's a Fool: and Superiority of* SENSE *is in Superiority of* NUMBERS.——*Wou'd you have a Man whipp'd round the Town, for a croſs-grain'd Puppy, becauſe He thinks himſelf in the Right Scent, when the full Cry of the Pack is againſt him?*

THUS, a few poſitive *Ninnies* may lead by the Noſe the Judgment of half the Town, and, when once they have fix'd the Stamp of *Diſlike* upon whatever *excellent* Work, every *faſhionable* Converſer muſt come into it, or bravely Stem the Current of *popular* Opinion.

COU'D *Time* be recall'd, *Such Judges* wou'd let *Otway* ſtarve, and *Lee* run mad, again; while an *Italian Singer*, or *French Dancer*, wou'd be careſs'd, and loaded with Riches.——Cou'd the Dead be rais'd, *Dryden* wou'd, by *ſuch Judges*, be once more reduc'd to Want, and his immortal *Genius* vilified; while a *Settle* wou'd grow fat, and a *Shadwell* be crown'd with *Laurel*.——Such Judges wou'd, *again*, damn *Phædra and Hippolitus*, and give the Author of Ch—t Ch—t a Thouſand Pounds. An Infamy, This Way of Judging, to the *Engliſh* Nation! not to be wip'd off by the greateſt Length of Time! and a Crime againſt every Thing *polite*, not to be expiated by the ſevereſt Repentance!

IF a Man is not qualified to be a Judge, what has he to do with Affairs above his Capacity? Let him conſider an Entertainment coolly, give his Opinion of it modeſtly; and, when he ſays more than that It *pleaſes*, or *diſpleaſes*, him, afford, at leaſt, ſome Sort of *Reaſon* for what he advances.

BUT it is not ſufficient for ſome People to *think weakly*, to have their Friends and Acquaintance ſatisfied that they do ſo; till, by *attempting Things out of their Sphere*, the Fact is, needleſsly, made publick.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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